Travel



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calm

Images of southern India: panorama of

HAVE A huge batik bedspread, in exotic purples and blues, hanging on
my wall at home. I bought it at the
Victoria Technical Institute in Madras, in the state of Tamul Nadu, where
they assured me it would fit a king-sized
bed. It doesn't, but it fits a large wail.
On the mantle over my fireplace is
graceful miniature boat with a high prow,
made of horn and set with tiny bone figures, each with his own little oar. Everytime I look at it I think of Trivandrum, on
the southern tip of India in the state of
Kerala.

Thursday, April 25, 1985 O&E



the southern the of indual and estate of kerala.

It was the British who made Indua a country with a single language, which of course is English. Before they came, the subcontinent was a hundred small kingdoms, each with its own culture. They still lave their individualized cultures and multiple tongues, even though they are now part of India.

part of India.
Tamil Nadu, southeast on the Indian
Ocean, and Kerala, southwest on the Arabian Sea, are the two southernmost states
of India. Traders from Cathay and Rome of India. Traders from Catanay and nome and Europe found the remains of ancient monuments on both of these coasts, and you will find them too. You will also find a slower, easier life, as you do in the southern areas of our country.

MADRAS WAS found by the British East India Co, in the 17th century, so your tour will find both British and ancient India here. The apostle St. Thomas is said to have introduced Christianity to India; to have itwed out his life in Madras and died not St. Thomas Mount. There are many interesting highlights in the city, but the most sensational stop on your Madras tour will probably be south amid the seventh-century temples of Mahabalipuram, carved rock temples by the sea. Indians don't swim in the sea as much as we do, but they have glorious beaches in the south, especially at Kovalam near Trivandrum in Kerala, which may be the most overlooked tourist destination in the country. Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India, and a mixed population that includes Christians, Jews, Arabs, Moslems and Hindus, who have lived together peacefully since the Portuguese explorers were here centuries ago.

Palm-studded beaches,

Palm-studded beaches. empty except for local fishermen and a few resorts, curve around the Arabian Sea to the Indian Ocean. In the backwater canais, boys pole boatloads of passengers past scenic coconut-palmfringed islands.



eocoput-palm-fringed islands

coconut-pain-fringed islands.
There are images here that most of us don't have in our mental slide show of India. The area around Trivandrum has a gentle south seas look, with cool breczes blowing through pain trees, fine sand beaches and villages set along gentle canals.

JOIN ME as two young boys pole us down a canal in a hand-made wooden boat. Small square-brick and mat houses thatched with palm dot coconut groves on either side. A woman bathes at the shores, her Kaill sarong wrapped around her like a bath towel. Children splash and wave, shouting "ta-ta" in greeting as we pass. Everything is mild, a gentle breeze, the slow drift of the boat toward the sand spit that separates the canal from the opten sea. Trees bend seaward.

Under the trees a family laughs and jumps in a circle, playing the games of the family festival of Oman. People are poor

another facet of the ancient land of India. There are temples and historic sights galore here.



At the southern tip of India are found the seventh-century temples of Maha-ballpuram, carved rock temples by the sea. A typical resident is this elderly man.

cottage industry of the area. Clusters of women and children, families and old men, greet us and stare as they walk under the high palm roof of the grove.

A boy ties his ankles together and climbs a palm to a encont cluster. A water buffalo is tied to a nearby tree.

"Namaste. Namaste." That is the traditional greeting, the "hello" of India, a slight bow with hands folded prayer-style

beneath the chin. They respond smiling to our "namaste," shy, waving, laughing gently at foreign ways. They see few tour-ists in their grove.

gently at foreign ways. They see few fourists in their grove.

THE CHILDREN laugh hilariously at
us as we stop to talk to them during a
local game of football.

This southern area is another facet of
the ancient land of India. There are temples and historic sights galore here, as in
other areas. There are festivals to delight
you. The bone boat on my mantle is a
miniature of those used for the snake race
during the Festival of Oman.

Classic Indian dancing is a very common form of entertalmment throughout
India, but here it takes a very famous
form, the Kathikail Dancers. Students
spend years learning the song and dance
of Kathikail. It takes several hours to apply makeup and dress for a single performance. During Hindu festivals, the story of the God Shiva (God of destruction
and reproduction) and his wife, Parvati,
are danced for several days.

Several hours may be more than enough
for most foreign tourists, but it is an artistic highlight of India.

Those who prefer discos and modern
nightlife should probably continue by indian Air Lines up the coast of the Arablan
Sea to Bombay, where you can shop in excellent government-sponsored qualitycontrolled handicraft shops, take a tour
boat to the Elephanta Caves and immerse
yourself once more in the grand hotels,
enjoy the monkeyman who entertains you
on the sidewalk and walk among the poor,
who are indeed always with us in India.

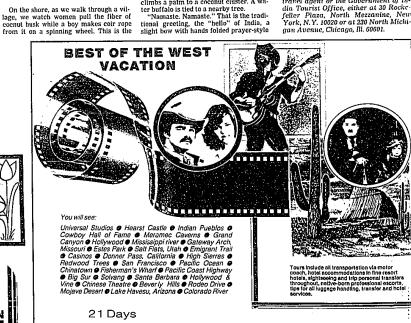
Images of India, We bring them home
as the best souvenirs from a land that has
given us brief glimpses into 5,000 years of
multiple cultural histories. There is a
dways more to the feast than we can eat,
but it is an experience that we will never
forget.

forget.
For more information, contact your ror more injornation, contact you travel agent or the Government of In-dia Tourist Office, either at 30 Rocke-feller Plaza, North Mezzanine, New York, N.Y. 10020 or at 230 North Michi-gan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60601.



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